



Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For Information Contact Public Affairs
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CONNECTICUT MAN ARRESTED FOR SALE OF FRAUDULENT "MOON ROCKS"

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- RICHARD KEITH MOUNTAIN, 52, was indicted by a federal grand jury for selling items that he represented as "moon rocks", collected from the surface of the moon by astronauts Neil A. Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., during the Apollo 11 lunar landing of July 20, 1969. **MOUNTAIN** was indicted on April 29, 1999, and was arrested on June 15, 1999, at his home in New Milford, Connecticut. He appeared in federal district court in Connecticut and was released on \$100,000 bond. **MOUNTAIN** is scheduled to appear in federal district court in Phoenix, Arizona, today, at 3:30 pm in front of Magistrate Judge Lawrence O. Anderson.

The indictment alleges that from March 1996 through April 29, 1999, **MOUNTAIN** owned and operated several businesses in Arizona and California that marketed artwork and other collectible items related to the manned exploration of space. Mountain Publishing, Pacific Coast Galaxy Publishing, and Cole Marketing Group were some of the businesses names that **MOUNTAIN** used. During this same period, it is alleged that **MOUNTAIN** represented to prospective buyers that he was acting as an agent to sell lunar soil samples ("moon rocks") that were transported from the moon to the Earth on Apollo 11. **MOUNTAIN** maintained that the samples were delivered by the astronauts to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for processing and analysis. He further maintained that the Italian Government later became the recipient of these lunar samples and then sold them to his supplier. **MOUNTAIN** told

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prospective buyers that the owner of the material had personally delivered the samples to **MOUNTAIN** to sell.

In furtherance of the fraud, it is alleged that **MOUNTAIN** created false documents purporting to certify the authenticity of the samples and offered to pay \$10,000 an individual associated with the NASA, Jet Propulsion Laboratory to falsely declare that the lunar samples were genuine. It is alleged that **MOUNTAIN** received in excess of \$80,000 from purchasers of the purported lunar samples.

MOUNTAIN is charged with 12 counts of Wire Fraud which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count and 12 counts of Mail Fraud which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment a \$250,000 fine, or both.

Mr. Rivera stressed that an indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and an individual's guilt is only established upon conviction.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by special agents from the NASA Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The prosecution is being handled by the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

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